1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

there is light laughter and gay voices. One group of men is at the men's house. Lovers have gone into the privacy of the deep bush, which even the moon cannot penetrate. The evening passes happily for everyone and bedtime comes close to midnight.

The days are full, but not hurried. In addition to the normal work there are the many feasts to prepare for, dances to be rehearsed for coming rites, and other preparations for ritual activities, which consume a large amount of time. To-day, also, the native is compelled to keep the road in good condition, and this work lessens the time for his own labour.[1] The native habit is to take time off when he is very tired or has nothing to do. For instance, after a strenuous three or four days of mortuary rites he sleeps for a whole day. But I did not see any healthy men or women spend many days in idleness. They were busy, with suitable intervals for leisure, and, on the whole, they lead an active life, but one without hurry or tension. No exact hour or day is set far in advance for an elaborate rite, but when the preparations are finished, the rite will be carried out.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

This daily life is set within a social structure which may be likened to an elastic configuration, functioning as the individuals live within it. In this configuration are certain fundamental elements which are chosen for detailed observation and study. These elements are the groupings of people on the basis of kinship, locality, and sex. The place of an individual within the structure and his various relationships with other people are largely determined (in so far as they are socially determined) by blood relationships, place of residence, and sex.

[1] He is required to give three days a week for this labour.

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

making a mask or *malanggan* he does nothing else but that.

Sex, then, is the major line on which the division of work is made and determines the daily labour. If a man becomes a specialist, it depends on his inheritance or purchase of magic, or special skill as a craftsman.

OCCUPATIONS

Those occupations which are most basic, in the sense that they go on continuously, are gardening, cooking, and fishing. Important, but more intermittent, are hunting, house-building, and the making of objects of material culture. The making of magic is not an occupation pursued for its own end, but is an intrinsic part and accompaniment of many tasks, as it is also of other aspects of life such as love-making or medical practices. The use of magic in connection with everyday occupations is indicated in the following description, but the detailed spells, their analysis as a way of thinking, the part they play in the mental life of the native, will be discussed in a later chapter.

GARDENING

Gardening consumes more time than any other occupation. On a normal day the adults start off for their gardens about an hour after sunrise and do not return until the middle of the afternoon. The gardens are usually some distance away from the village, sometimes a good hour's walk from the beach, along a narrow footpath through the bush. The reason for making the gardens so far away is that if made in the village the domestic pigs would break into them and eat the taro. Even as it is, the wild pigs do sometimes break in, and fences are always being mended to keep the animals out.

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

Wealth is not hoarded, but instead is always being put in circulation at the constant ritual feasts. And there is no reason why wealth should be saved over any long interval. Old age does not mean economic insecurity. For every old person is well taken care of by either his own children or by classificatory ones. The old people, men and women, are the most respected members of the community, and it is unthinkable that any one of them should be in want.

In this society of rich, but no poor, where only industry is required to secure the essentials of life, one may ask, What becomes of the lazy man? For as men vary in skill and intelligence, so also do they vary in industry. In Lesu, if a man is too lazy to work, he will not starve. His relatives will give him food, and should they grow disgusted with him, other members of the community will feed him. No member of the village would go hungry, unless there was some general famine affecting everyone. But while the lazy man will have a place to sleep, and food to eat, and can even enjoy life in his own way, he will be a man of no importance in the community. He will have no influence in discussions; it will be difficult for him to secure a wife (and the same applies to a lazy woman securing a husband); he will not be able to give big feasts; and he will have no prestige. In a society largely motivated by prestige, this is a serious handicap. Although the burden of the lazy man's support will be carried by his family (immediate and extended) and by the community, if the family gets disgusted, he will remain a man of no account, and will have no influence in the communal life. Some of the abusive and insulting language to those who have no wealth brings out the opinion in which they are held:

Umär atsuga ärup numka tsera: you are no good; you have no currency.

Umär atsuga ärup numka bul; you are no good; you have no pig.

These are the insulting taunts hurled in moments of anger,

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

and show the position of a man who is merely willing to exist and to collect no wealth. The speeches of women at initiation and other rites about their lazy husbands give evidence of the same attitude. The impression is strengthened even more in the casual conversation and everyday life of the community. For instance, many people have discussed with me quite frankly the position of Ladawin, a young man who shows no inclination for work. It is freely predicted that he will not get a wife, and he is very obviously not looked upon as one of the coming men.

The economic organization is well integrated with the environment and the social structure, and it creaks less noticeably than the economic structures of many of our Western societies. Needs are provided for; there is no insecurity; individual skill and ability is appreciated; wealth is accumulated only to be redistributed again and to thus bring prestige. The underlying social forces—the principle of reciprocity, the desire for prestige, respect for the old, the kinship system—are the animating principles of the economic organization.